

budget division. He later served as DLA Comptroller, as Administrator of the Defense National Stockpile Center, and as the Director, DLA Support Services.

Mr. Connelly grew up in Boston and graduated from Boston College in 1968. He attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps, and served one year in Vietnam. Mr. Connelly attended Stanford University Graduate School of Business as a Sloan Fellow and received a Master of Science degree in management in 1978.

Mr. Connelly became Director of Defense Energy Support Center (DESC) on November 3, 2003, directing the Department of Defense organization that is responsible for purchasing and managing all petroleum resources used by the United States military. In addition, Mr. Connelly has guided the growing mission of total energy support by developing strategies to buy and sell deregulated electricity and natural gas to federal agency customers.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Mr. Richard J. Connelly on his retirement from Federal Civil Service. He epitomizes the dedication and professionalism that make our Federal government a model all over the world.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TROOPS TO TEACHERS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. PETRI. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act to improve opportunities for veterans to transition into second careers in teaching. I am pleased to once again be joined in this effort by Congresswoman DORIS MATSUI. I have been a supporter of the Troops to Teachers program since its authorization, and I am proud of its success over the last decade. Since 1994, this program has placed nearly 10,000 veterans in our nation's classrooms.

Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides retiring military with a \$5,000 stipend to help cover the costs of teaching certification in exchange for three years service in a high-need school, which until recently was defined as receiving grants under part A of Title I. To further encourage participants to teach in schools with the greatest need, a \$10,000 bonus is offered to those who agree to teach for three years in a school with 50% of students below the poverty level.

This structure has proven very effective in transitioning qualified retiring military personnel into second careers in teaching. Indeed, Troops participants fill several critical needs among educators: eighty-two percent are male, over one-third ethnic minorities, and a majority bring an expertise in science and math to the classroom. In an increasingly globalized economy, these valuable characteristics provide a vital resource for schools across the country.

However, this success is now in jeopardy due to a drafting error in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act which has inadvertently restricted the number of schools at which partici-

pants may fulfill their service. The applicable definition for "high-need local education agencies" for Troops to Teachers was inadvertently changed as it was included in the section of the legislation regarding other alternative programs that had a different definition. This stricter definition requires a higher threshold for "high-need," requiring the school to have either 10,000 students or 20% of students from families below the poverty level. However, the original Title I definition of high-need was also retained in the law in the section specifically detailing the Troops program. Essentially, Congress inadvertently created two conflicting definitions of "high-need" with regard to this program.

Early on, the Department of Education and the Troops to Teachers program recognized this unintended change in law and worked together to address it. From 2003–2005, while discussions were being held on how to reconcile this discrepancy, the program continued to operate under the original and intended definition. However, after the completion of a negotiated rulemaking process in September 2005, the Department issued a regulation stating that the new, stricter definition was not an error but congressional intent. As one of the leading supporters of this program during the drafting of No Child Left Behind, I can assure my colleagues that this was clearly not the intent of the supporters of the program.

Madam Speaker, the unfortunate result of this, aside from limiting the number of schools at which veterans may teach and honor their obligation of three-years service, is that it has disproportionately impacted western and rural states. In my home state of Wisconsin, the number of eligible school districts has been reduced from approximately 400 to 11. Not surprisingly, participation in the program has fallen significantly since the implementation of the new definition last year. This decision, although understandable given the conflicting definitions contained in the law, is a disservice both to veterans wishing to continue their service to our nation as educators as well as children who stand to benefit from their unique expertise.

The bottom line is that we are losing out on great teachers because they cannot accept the certification stipend due to a lack of schools meeting the higher needs threshold in their community. The more we restrict opportunities for participation, the fewer teachers we will be able to bring into public education, and the fewer teachers we will eventually be able to attract to the schools with the greatest need. Further, given the President's recent focus on the need for more math and science teachers, as well as his support for adjunct and alternative routes to teaching programs, we should be removing, not creating, restrictions that prevent qualified teachers in these areas from teaching in our Nation's classrooms.

Madam Speaker, with Troops to Teachers, the Department already has an established program that is well-funded and successful. Rather than restricting it, we should be maximizing this program's potential. This bill would still require participants to teach in high-need schools, as defined by the Department, but if no such school exists within a 50-mile radius of the participant, that participant will be eligible to fulfill the obligation in a school that serves low-income students under the original definition. This ensures that Troops partici-

pants teach in high-need schools first and foremost, but are not locked out of the program based on the demographic make-up of their communities.

This is a pragmatic solution that is perfectly consistent with the spirit of No Child Left Behind while also supporting our veterans and students by maximizing opportunities for participation. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this successful program and restoring the opportunity to "serve again" to our Nation's veterans.

TRIBUTE TO FIRST GRADE CLASS AT RACCOON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the first-grade students at Raccoon Elementary School in Centralia, Illinois. In just 2 weeks, these young boys and girls raised \$111 to buy care packages for local soldiers serving in the Middle East.

With the guidance of their teachers, Wendy Bookhout and Amy Verble, the first-graders were the first participants in the Raccoon PRIDE program. This character building education plan challenges students to praise, encourage, and respect others as well as to get involved in their community, help others, and to do the right thing.

The students donated the money they raised to Steve Smith's Second Soldier Christmas Drive. Mr. Smith then sent the care packages containing quilts, phone cards, bibles, cookies, and socks, as well as many other items for the holidays.

I am pleased to congratulate the following Raccoon first-grade class for their hard work and dedication to helping others. God bless them for their service.

Jimmy Dale Allison, Dillion Michael Adams, Abraham August Applegate, Jonathan Altom, Jeremy Joseph Cameron, Mara Kalyn Bookhout, McKenzie Christine Card, Timothy Tyler Donoho, Paige Danielle Gooden, Anna Draper, Abbie Elaine Harris, Alyssa Finley, Skylar Elizabeth Keele, Autumn Dawn George.

Devon Michael Dwain Milburn, Cameron Tyler Hoard, Anastasia Marie Moistner, Kelsey Marie Littleton, Caleb Emmerson Michael Page, Valarie Marie Meadows, Shianne Alexis Smith, Shawn M. Morton, Molly Ann Thompson, Barbara Shiann Pauley, Justin Kyle Tindall, Rex Nicholas Rexilius, Katlyn Paige Whipple, Ryan Lloyd Tate, and Carter John Wilson.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARO

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 29, 2007

Mr. CASTLE. Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to remember the brave and heroic life of Barbaro. This magnificent racehorse connected with so many Americans because of his drive and determination.